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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 001950

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SUBJECT: DUTCH CONFIRM EU PLANS FOR MINISTERIAL TROIKA  
VISIT TO MINSK UNDERWAY

REF: SECSTATE 122886

CLASSIFIED BY A/POLCOUNS ERIC LUNDBERG; REASONS 1.5 (B,D).

1.(C) DUTCH MFA UKRAINE/BELARUS OFFICERS CONFIRMED THAT THE FRENCH EU PRESIDENCY IS ASSUMING THE EARLIER EU TASKING TO THE PORTUGUESE FOR A MINISTERIAL TROIKA VISIT TO MINSK BEFORE THE FALL ELECTIONS. THEY ATTRIBUTE THE IMPETUS FOR THIS HIGH LEVEL VISIT TO OSCE AMG HEAD AMB WIECK'S EARLIER APPEALS TO THE EU FOR HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL SUPPORT. THEY NOTE THAT, WHILE THE NETHERLANDS PREFERRED A POLITICAL DIRECTOR LEVEL VISIT, MOST EU STATES OPTED FOR THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL BECAUSE THEY CONSIDERED THE CURRENT ELECTION WINDOW SUCH A HIGH PRIORITY. ADDITIONALLY, THEY COMMENTED THAT THE PREVAILING SENTIMENT WITHIN THE EU IS THAT A VISIT TO MINSK MUST OCCUR BEFORE LUKASHENKO PROMULGATES A NEW ELECTION FRAMEWORK, OPERATIONALLY MEANING THE VISIT SHOULD OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

2.(C) AS FOR THE VISIT'S GUIDELINES, THE DUTCH MFA OFFICIALS SAID THE TROIKA MINISTERS WOULD HEW CLOSELY TO THE OSCE TROIKA'S FOUR CONDITIONS AND COMMENTED THAT THE NETHERLANDS UNDERSTANDS THE NEED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO SPEAK TO LUKASHENKO WITH ONE VOICE. THEY ADDED THAT THE NETHERLANDS WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY LUKASHENKO'S "BLATANT USE OF JUDICIAL PROCESSES TO MARGINALIZE AND LIMIT HIS POLITICAL OPPOSITION."

3.(C) ON A BILATERAL NOTE, MFA UKRAINE DESK OFFICER HANS SCHUTTE REMARKED THAT THE NETHERLANDS HOPES THE NEAR-TERM VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER VAN AARTSEN TO KIEV WILL CONTRAST POIGNANTLY THE WESTERN COMMUNITY'S EMBRACE OF UKRAINE WITH ITS VERY CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF BELARUS. SCHUTTE EXPLAINED THAT VAN AARTSEN PLANS TO PRAISE UKRAINE-NATO COOPERATION, SUCH AS THE RECENT SOFA FINALIZATION AND UKRAINIAN KFOR CONTRIBUTIONS, AS WELL AS DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE.

TOKOLA